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# **Bulgaria and the United States: Allies in Democracy and Partners in Expanding Freedom**

**By  
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Secretary of State**

[The following are excerpts given before the Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of U.S.-Bulgarian Diplomatic Relations, Sofia, Bulgaria, May 15, 2003.]

Dobur den, Bulgari! I stand here and see our two flags so close, side-by-side. They look so beautiful. May we always remain as close as our two flags are today. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your very gracious introduction. Mr. President, Minister Passy, Mr. Chairman, distinguished guests, my friends, representing President Bush and the American people, I am honored to be here, here in Battenberg Square, to begin the centennial celebration of U.S. and Bulgarian diplomatic relations.

On September 19, 1903, a court carriage drawn by four horses and with an honor guard pulled up to the former palace just behind me. Out came Mr. John Jackson, who went inside to present his diplomatic credentials to Prince Ferdinand, who later became the Tzar. Now, today, almost one-hundred years later, I am greeted by the grandson of the Tzar, not as a Tzar, but the freely elected Prime Minister of a free and democratic Bulgaria. Our two countries have much more to celebrate today than reaching a one-hundredth anniversary, for Bulgaria and the United States have become allies in democracies and partners in expanding freedom around the world. Americans are proud to have played a part in Bulgaria's past. We are proud to be your partner as you work to complete your full integration into what President Bush so rightly calls "a Europe whole, free and at peace."

In years past, American diplomats and journalists helped draw the world's attention to the oppression Bulgarians suffered at the hands of foreign powers. And 19th century American missionaries shared ideas about freedom with the founding fathers of an independent Bulgaria. Today, our Peace Corps volunteers are working hand-in-hand with you to strengthen your new democracy. The American College of Sofia, whose wonderful choir will grace our ceremony today, along with the American University in Bulgaria, are both preparing new generations for success in a 21st century world. Today, as we mark one-hundred years of diplomatic relations between our two nations, the American people warmly embrace Bulgaria's dynamic new democracy. Our nations passed another major milestone just last week when the United States Senate voted unanimously to welcome Bulgaria into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. And the vote was ninety-six to zero! Unanimous! No one voted against!

I must stop to congratulate my good friend, your Foreign Minister, Solomon Passy, for all the hard work that he put into this historic vote in our United States Senate, and also to congratulate your distinguished Ambassador to the United States. They are both doing a wonderful job for the people of Bulgaria. As President Bush said following the historic senate vote: "Americans have always considered the Bulgarian people to be our friends, and we will be proud to call you our allies."

In the span of less than a generation, relations between Bulgaria and the United States have gone from Cold War existence to a warm and growing strategic partnership. Your institutions have grown and moved as your democracy has developed. The seat of your head of state, now democratically elected, has moved to the presidential offices to my right. That is where ambassadors present their credentials today. And across from the presidential offices, the old party house, once a symbol of dictatorship, now holds offices of elected members of parliament. All of these accomplishments reflect the historic choices you have made, choices that demonstrate the vision of your leaders and the values of the Bulgarian people. And as a result of the democratic

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path that you have chosen, relations between Bulgaria and the United States are the best they have ever been in all of the past one hundred years.

The American People will never forget Bulgaria's steadfast support following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. And we deeply appreciate your help ever since in the international campaign against terrorism. The vicious attacks a few days ago in Saudi Arabia only reinforce our resolve to eradicate terrorism worldwide. Time and again, Bulgaria has shown leadership and demonstrated its stalwart support on the part of your government leaders and on the part of your parliament.

We stood together on Iraq. I remember well the intense eight weeks at the United Nations Security Council last fall. The United States worked day and night to forge consensus behind *U.N. Resolution 1441* to put maximum pressure on Iraq to disarm peacefully. I remember well, Solomon Passy, your Foreign Minister, when he stood with us for a second resolution and he said to the whole world: "We know what fear is, and we are not afraid." With the solid backing of your parliament, you took a clear position in favor of helping the people of Iraq and ridding the region of a dictator's threats. Bulgaria then made the courageous decision to join the coalition of the willing that freed the world from the threat posed by Saddam Hussein. You stayed true to your principles and had the courage to act.

I want in particular to thank the people of Bulgaria for welcoming American soldiers to Sarafovo. Thank you for making them feel at home and helping them accomplish their important mission. As I speak, the United States and Bulgaria are serving together in Bosnia, in Kosovo, in Afghanistan. Shortly, we will serve together in Iraq. Together, we will bring stability to Iraq, we will help the Iraqi people as they tackle the hard work of reconstruction and establish their own democracy.

Today, Bulgarian and American diplomats serve side-by-side on the United Nations Security Council in New York. And soon we will be colleagues in the North Atlantic Council in Brussels. In so many ways, Bulgarians and Americans are working in partnership to build a safer, freer, better world. A little over a hundred years ago, from a spot just a short walk from here, Aleko Konstantinov set off to climb Mount Vitosha. You have scaled far higher mountains to bring Bulgaria into the Euro-Atlantic family and the worldwide community of democracies. We salute you.

The 21st century holds its perils to be sure. But it also holds tremendous promise for those who cherish the democratic values that Bulgarians and Americans share. Your warm welcome today tells me that together Bulgaria and the United States seize the promise of the future for the next one-hundred years and beyond.